

# Meeting Minutes

October 17, 2017

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## Instructional Materials Committee

Facilitator: Fred Rundle, Assistant Superintendent of Learning Services • Secretary: Vanessa Adams, Learning Services

**Present:**

Ahisha Avant  
David Baxter  
Carol Best  
Jackie Brown  
Kelsey Cochran  
Lauren Dolby  
Jeff Geoghagan  
Kristin Kim  
Creighton Laughary  
Matt Lavigne  
Channing Martin  
Jamie Prescott  
Kathy Shaner  
Laura Totten  
Kelly Tran  
Brigit White  
Nova Williams

**Absent:**

Andrea Dunbar  
Alice Finch  
Ursula Panagiotou  
Anne Rubin  
Fred Rundle  
Lisa Stewart  
Rohan Tatum  
Scott Weiss

The meeting was called to order at 4:15 pm. In Fred Rundle's absence, the meeting was facilitated by Nova Williams, Assistant Director of Learning Services.

The committee read an overview of Board Policy 2019 and its Procedures. Policy 2019 governs the work of the Instructional Materials Committee (IMC). Comprised of a variety of stakeholders, the IMC ensures that materials undergo appropriate review.

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### ***The Namesake, a novel***

11th grade American Studies, AP Language & Composition—core material in 2017-2018

**Written by:** Jhumpa Lahiri

**Published by:** Mariner Books, 2003

**Proposal submitted by:** MIHS English teachers Curtis Johnston, Creighton Laughary, Daniela Melgar, Jane Stafford

Creighton explained that the English department has used their core texts for a long time. The English department wants to offer more contemporary and diverse perspectives in their curriculum. One of the texts that *The Namesake* will replace is *The Jungle*, written in 1906. Adopting *The Namesake* as core material will address the MIHS goal of equity and inclusion. The award-winning novel is written by a female author and has a diverse range of female characters. It voices the perspectives of members of a Bengali-American family. Creighton shared that Daniela is researching materials that focus on Latina, African, Chinese and Indian cultures.

The team evaluated digital copies of *The Namesake* but determined that paper copies are a better option at this time.

**Vote:** Kelsey Cochran motioned to approve *The Namesake* as core material for MIHS 11th grade American Studies, AP Language & Composition starting in the 2017-18 school year. Jamie Prescott seconded the motion. There were no abstentions. The motion passed.

### ***American Born Chinese, a novel***

10th grade English—pilot in 2017-2018, with the possibility of moving to core material after

**Written by:** Gene Luen Yang

**Published by:** Macmillan, 2008

**Proposal submitted by:** MIHS English teachers Creighton Laughary and Eric Goldhammer

Creighton said that there is a lot of buzz in other school districts about *American Born Chinese*. With its non-Western perspective, this book will add another layer of diversity to the English department's texts. It will also be their first graphic novel, one that should appeal to different types of learners. Its 21st-century protagonist challenges and embraces the immigrant stereotypes he encounters. Teachers hope this will overcome any sensitivity minority students might feel. They expect it to lead to real understanding for all students about contemporary stereotypes. They will compare and contrast to the coming-of-age and search-for-identity themes in *The Catcher in the Rye*.

*American Born Chinese* is such a fast read that the text is expected to require supplemental materials.

**Vote:** Jackie Brown motioned to adopt *American Born Chinese* as pilot material for 10<sup>th</sup> grade English during the 2017-18 school year. Jamie Prescott seconded the motion. There were no abstentions. The motion passed.

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### ***Purple Hibiscus, a novel***

Either in 10th grade English classes or some 12th grade English classes —pilot in 2017-2018, with the possibility of moving to core material after.

**Written by:** Chimimanda Ngozi Adichie

**Published by:** Workman, 2012

**Proposal submitted by:** MIHS English teachers Creighton Laughary and Eric Goldhammer

The female protagonist in *Purple Hibiscus* struggles through adolescence in Nigeria during family and political turmoil. The English department believes it is a great book. Many other schools are adopting it. However, Creighton noted, it's a dark story which may trigger some students. Difficult conversations may arise about racism and sexism.

Finding commonalities in all populations is a learning target for students. However, the English department recognizes that there are alternate ways to meet it. Nova remarked that the piloting process unearths and addresses concerns about sensitive material. The English department may decide during piloting that this text is too sensitive. But they are experienced and know the Mercer Island community. This book offers a unique perspective to our students, as well as opportunities to explore other works by the author. It comes with a wealth of supplementary material.

**Vote:** Kathy Shaner motioned to adopt *Purple Hibiscus* as pilot material for either 10th grade English classes, or in some 12th grade English classes for the 2017-18 school year. Jeff Geoghagan seconded the motion. There were no abstentions. The motion passed.

The meeting adjourned at 5:14 pm.